

Volunteer Role Description – Independent Visitor

General Description of Duties

The Independent Visitor Scheme is for children who are cared for by West Sussex and who are between the ages of 8-21. Independent Visitors are matched with children who have little or no contact with their birth families, or where it is considered in their best interest for them to have an adult outside of the professional network, to provide a consistent, positive and supportive relationship. Independent Visitors befriend and advise the individual child they are matched with, visiting them at their foster or children's home on a regular basis and taking them out, e.g. to the park or beach, swimming, bowling, etc.

Skills Required

- Able to relate to children and young people and have fun with them!
- Patient and willing to focus on the individual needs of the child
- Able to listen without prejudice
- Ready to support the child to voice their views
- Keen to participate in activities with them
- Consistent, reliable and trustworthy
- Able to maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality

Ideal Volunteer

- Has experience of positive engagement with children and/or young people, which may have been gained in a personal, paid or voluntary capacity
- Can commit time and energy to the role
- Enjoys supporting a child, spending time with them and engaging in activities
- Can visit a child regularly and maintain contact throughout the match
- Can commit to visiting the child for at least two years, hopefully longer
- Will participate in initial and ongoing training and regular supervision
- Will follow guidance and work within the agreed expectations of the role
- Lives in or very near West Sussex
- Drives confidently and has access to a car (preferably)

People who cannot be an Independent Visitor

Government guidance is clear that the following people cannot be considered sufficiently "independent" to take on the role of Independent Visitor:

- Anyone working in a social care role with Children cared for by WSCC (so, for example, a residential worker, social worker or foster carer is not acceptable, but a teacher would be)
- The spouse/partner of anyone working in a social care role with WSCC Looked After Children

- An elected Member of WSCC
- The spouse/partner of an elected Member of WSCC

Regularity of Duties

The regularity of visits is dependent on the wishes of the child and the volunteer's availability. Visits are usually once monthly, initially for a few hours, but often for longer as the relationship develops. It is very likely to include weekend appointments and possibly visits after school or in school holidays.

Details of Duties

- Regularly visit a child who is cared for by West Sussex County Council
- Develop a positive, consistent and supportive relationship with them
- Listen and provide sound advice from a lay perspective and ensure the child's voice is heard
- Represent them during meetings if they ask for your support
- Encourage the child to participate in decision-making
- Contribute to the care plan for the child and work in co-operation with others who have responsibility for the child, including their carer(s) and social worker
- Be committed to ongoing personal development and supervision

Training and Assessment

Volunteer applicants complete a comprehensive training and assessment programme which is followed by recommendation to the Independent Visitor Approval Panel and induction.

Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS)

Volunteers will need to undertake an enhanced DBS check as part of the selection process. For approved volunteers, this is repeated every 3 years.

References & other checks

References covering the last five years will be taken up during the selection process, together with a health questionnaire and a local authority check. For approved volunteers, these checks are re-done every 3 years.

Guidance and Support

Volunteers adhere to the IV Scheme's policies and procedures. They receive support and guidance from the Independent Visitor Scheme Co-ordinator via phone and regular supervision and are reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses connected to visits. There are opportunities for volunteers to meet through regular support group meetings and ongoing learning/training sessions.

Other Information

Male and female volunteers over 21 years old, of all ages and backgrounds, are encouraged to apply and we particularly welcome applications from people from all ethnic groups, male volunteers and those under 40.

Amended 04/06/2025
JS